

# THE BANK

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March 3, 2006

My name is Scott Ball. I am president of the Bank of Salem, an \$80 million community bank in rural Missouri. I have lived in Salem my entire life (except college years). I have seen many changes in my community over the past 47 years. Some of these changes have been the direct result of Wal-Mart coming to town.

Wal-Mart came to Salem in the mid 1970's. Since that time, I have seen the closing of many locally owned and operated businesses. Presently, in my town of 4,800 people, there is no longer a shoe store, a hardware store, a jewelry store, or a men's & women's new clothing store (not one!). I have seen grocery stores close and lumber businesses close. Our downtown main street is marked by empty buildings and vacant store fronts. I submit to you that Wal-Mart is directly to blame for this situation. Oh, but we have a nice new Wal-Mart Supercenter where people are forced to shop to find the items that are no longer available anywhere else.

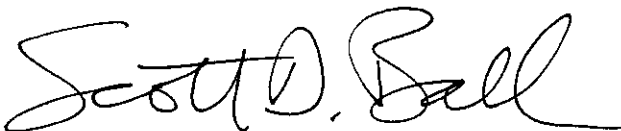
Salem has three commercial banks and one savings bank. The three banks were established in 1883, 1894, and 1904. We have survived the Great Depression, 2 World Wars, the high interest rates of the early 80's and the low interest rates of the early 00's. Two of Salem's banks and the savings bank are still locally owned and operated. They are mostly staffed by employees whose families have lived in Salem for generations.

We are community banks with the best interest of our community in mind. When our community thrives, so do the banks. When our community suffers, so do the banks.

I shudder at the thought of a Wal-Mart Bank. I fear that the future of three local banking institutions with over 100 years of history each would be in jeopardy. Our customers and our business come from the community, and we invest back into the community. Wal-Mart would have the advantage of coast to coast pricing and investing, while shipping their corporate profits out of town daily (as they do now).

I urge you to close any remaining loopholes that might allow Wal-Mart (or other corporations) to own and operate a bank. I urge you, for the sake of my bank and my community to keep Wal-Mart out of banking.

Sincerely,



Scott D. Ball, President  
Bank of Salem

A DENT COUNTY TRADITION SINCE 1883

MEMBER FDIC